



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE
10 W. JACKSON BLVD.
CHICAGO, IL 60604

Fact Sheet

Contact: Marilú Cabrera
Gail Montenegro
(312) 385-1925

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The History of National "Citizenship Day"

In the spring of 1940, the Immigration and Naturalization Service joined interested civic and fraternal organizations in recommending to Congress that a National Citizenship Day be established. As a result, Congress passed Public Resolution No. 67 later that year, authorizing the President to issue an annual proclamation setting aside the third Sunday in May as "I Am An American Day" as a public occasion for the recognition of all who have attained the status of citizenship.

The first Presidential proclamation of National Citizenship Day was issued May 3, 1940. Soon after a proposal was introduced to change the date and designation of "I Am An American Day." On February 19, 1952, Congress designated September 17 of each year as National Citizenship Day.

"Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of American in Congress assembled, that the 17th day of September of each year is hereby designated as "Citizenship Day" in commemoration of the formation and signing, on September 17, 1787, of the Constitution of the United States and in recognition of all who, by coming of age or by naturalization, have attained the status of citizenship... That the civil and educational authorities... are hereby urged to make plans for the proper observance of this day and for the full instruction of citizens in their responsibilities and opportunities as citizens of the United States..."

Each year the President of the United States issues a proclamation calling upon the people of this country to rededicate themselves to the principles of good citizenship on National Citizenship Day and to celebrate the diversity of this nation.

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